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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000455

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SUBJECT: MOSQUE SERMONS FOR SAUDI ARABIA JUNE 30: EASTERN  
PROVINCE IMAM LAUDS STABILITY, CALLS TERRORISTS MURDERERS;  
MECCA SERMON ASSERTS RELIGION CAN NOT BE CRITICIZED; IN  
MEDINA, IMAM SAYS MILITANTS HAVE BETRAYED THEIR ALLEGIANCE  
TO THEIR RULER

Classified By: Consul General Tatiana Gfoeller, for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

FROM THE EASTERN PROVINCE: SAUDI GOVERNMENT PRAISED FOR  
PROVIDING SECURITY AND STABILITY

1. (C) In a remarkable change from his critical sermons of  
preceding weeks, Imam Mohammad al-Qahtani used his sermon t  
the Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal Mosque at al-Khobar o praise the  
Saudi government for providing securty, political stbility  
and promoting the welfar of the people. The lesson began  
with a description of God's blessings for which Saudis should  
b grateful. Then he said that the Saudi government has  
always striven to make the security of its citizens and  
foreign residents its preeminent priority. "People," he told  
the worshippers, "should realize the hard work and dedication  
that has been expended on the government's part to realize  
this priority."

SAUDI ARABIA OFFERS FREEDOM TO WORSHIP!

2. (C) Al-Qahtani praised the government for giving its  
people and Muslim visitors the opportunity and freedom (sic)  
to worship their faith in peace and security, a privilege  
that he said "should be revered and protected." COMMENT:  
This freedom is not extended to the non-Muslim or even  
non-Sunni residents of Saudi Arabia. END COMMENT. The imam  
related the story of a British Jewish woman who had come to  
the Kingdom to visit her daughter and Muslim son-in-law. She  
was so inspired by the peace and security she experienced,  
observing: "people in Saudi Arabia can venture outdoors for a  
walk on the cornice in the middle of the night or go to a  
mosque for the early morning dawn prayers without fear of  
being raped, assaulted, robbed, mugged or murdered," that she  
converted to Islam. The imam asked the congregation to  
compare that condition with the situation in Iraq. "There,  
worshippers, shoppers, students, employers, ordinary folks  
all get attacked with missiles and get blown to pieces for  
just stepping outside their homes."

TERRORISTS: THE MURDERERS WITHIN

3. (C) Al-Qahtani then asked the audience, "Was it Bush,  
Putin, Olmert, or Sharon who caused the death of countless  
innocent people on our streets and highways? Were the  
culprits our own flesh and blood? Who murdered the hundreds

of men, women and children? Who killed the scores of security personnel who lost their lives defending you and me and defending our honor and country? Yes, they all died as a result of unprovoked and premeditated attacks on civilian residential compounds and on security units? These were cold-blooded murderers who came from within our very own ranks. ... Brothers, it's time we gave our government a helping hand. It is our duty to help our government to face and kill off this cancer before it spreads further. Otherwise we risk turning our country into another Somalia." He concluded with a call "Let's all work together to protect the Land of the Two Holy Mosques, to protect it from those who wish it ill. Let's drive its enemies out."

FROM MECCA: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS NOT SUBJECT TO CRITICISM

¶4. (U) Lecturing from the pulpit at the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Imam Shaykh Dr. Salih Bin Abdallah Bin-Humayd delivered a sermon that superficially appeared to address an esoteric aspect of theological doctrine, but, given the sensitive debate over reform within the Kingdom and Islam, could also be seen as a not-too-subtle call for inflexible conservatism. He spoke about the names and classifications used and different opinions expressed on religious matters noting "Men of knowledge and opinion could differ and argue and each might stick to his opinion and insist on his convictions. This is his reserved right. However," the imam declared, "the right to differ must not prejudice religious constants, the preservation of the nation's unity, and the achievement of the higher interests of religion and the country."

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RELIGION IS ETERNAL AND CONSTANT

¶5. (U) He enlarged on this contention thus: "Criticism of religious provisions, constants, and roots is rejected. The provisions of the Book and the Sunnah, the constants of faith, the roots of religion, the greater issues of faith, the unanimous decisions made by the nation, and religious rules are not subject to criticism. On the contrary, the requirement is to hold to them tenaciously and to defend them and not accept their prejudice."

FOREIGN INFLUENCES CAUSE DISUNITY

¶6. (U) In his second sermon, the imam pursued the same idea. He told the worshipers: "the crown prince of this country,... made a speech to this nation in general, and the men of religion, opinion, and thought, in particular,.. the men of knowledge and opinion, who assume the greater responsibility in refuting these terms and expressions and the need to give them up in speech and writing." The imam continued: "It is a mistake to use any term or expression without understanding it or the circumstances of its emergence and awareness of its dimensions and meanings on the social, intellectual, political, and historical levels. It is a mistake also not to revise these terms and expressions, explain what is intended by them and define their meanings. The definition of terms helps with the definition of stands in any issue or subject. It is clear, O Muslims, these names and classifications or many of them, are of foreign origin. They divide the region ... by terms like progressive, reactionary, rights, leftist." The imam cautioned the congregation to employ terms from the Islamic tradition.

FROM MEDINA: REJECT INNOVATIONS

¶7. (U) Speaking at the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, Imam

Shaykh Ali Bin-Abd-al-Rahman al-Hudhayfi counseled his audience to recognize that "religion is advice," and against accepting "misleading innovations" that plotted against Islam, divided Muslims and weakened them since the time of the orthodox caliphs."

TERRORISTS ARE THE MODERN AL-KHAWARIJ

18. (U) He reminded the congregation that "the first evil that penetrated Muslims after their agreement and the first ideology that unsheathed the sword of fighting between Muslims was that of al-Khawarij, who rebelled against Caliph Uthman and then killed him, thereby sparking a great sedition." The imam then condemned terrorists as the new al-Khawarij, sundering the umma (Islamic Community) such as was occurring in Iraq. He then called out to militants: "As to the militants of our time, they have killed innocent people and spread fear in this country. They have rebelled against their rulers." He then cited the recently publicized offer of the Crown Prince to grant amnesty to insurgents who turn themselves in to authorities, saying "surrendering themselves is better than surrendering to the devil."

Gfoeller